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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 SAB-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /067 W
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O 172233Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7577
INFO PANCANAL
USSOUTHCOM
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PBOR, PN, OVIP (CARTER, JIMMY)
SUBJECT: CARTER TRIP GOES OVER BIG
SUMMARY. PRESIDENT CARTER'S TRIP WAS HIGHLY BENEFICIAL IN PROMOTING TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT IMMEDIATE GOALS OF OUR POLICY IN PANAMA: 1) CREATING AMONG PANAMANIANS A MOOD OF COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. IN THE CANAL ENTERPRISE AND 2) REASSURING THE PEOPLE WHO OPERATE THE CANAL THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT HAS THEIR INTERESTS IN MIND. THE MOST SPECTACULAR POINT OF THE TRIP WAS FRIDAY'S HUGH CROWD IN CINCO DE MAYO PLAZA, BUT A MORE LASTING ACHIEVEMENT MAY HAVE BEEN PRESIDENT CARTER'S WINSOME APPEARANCES IN THE CANAL ZONE. END SUMMARY.

1. AIR FORCE ONE TOOK OFF AT ABOUT 1350 HOURS TODAY. THIS ENDED A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL VISIT BY PRESIDENT CARTER
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TO PANAMA AND THE CANAL ZONE.

2. THE TRIP'S OPENER FRIDAY AFTERNOON WAS THE SIGNING OF THE PROTOCOLS OF RATIFICATION AT THE NEW PANAMA GYMNASIUM. THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH STRUCK US AS ABOUT RIGHT IN THE EMPHASIS ON THE NEED FOR FUTURE COOPERATION AND ITS REITERATION OF THE NON-INTERVENTION PRINCIPLE. GENERAL

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TORRIJOS'S SPEECH COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER FROM OUR STAND-
POINT--PERHAPS IT WAS A LITTLE GRACELESS IN ITS EMPHASIS ON
THE VIET-NAM-LIKE EVILS WE ARE PRESUMED TO HAVE AVOIDED,
BUT IT WAS CERTAINLY WARM AND APPRECIATIVE IN ITS ATTITUDE
TOWARD PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE U.S.

3. THOUGH THE SIGNING WAS OSTENSIBLY THE POINT OF THE
VISIT, IT WAS IMMEDIATELY OVERSHADOWED BY THE MASSIVE
TURNOUT FOR SPEECHES OF TORRIJOS AND PRESIDENT CARTER IN
CINCO DE MAYO PLAZA. ESTIMATING CROWDS, PARTICULARLY IN
BROKEN UP AREAS SUCH AS CINCO DE MAYO, IS RISKY BUSINESS;
BUT THIS CROWD WAS ENORMOUS BY ANY STANDARDS. U.S.
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATED IT AT A QUARTER OF A
MILLION - PERHAPS A GOOD BIT MORE. THAT IS BETWEEN A
SEVENTH AND A FIFTH OF THE POPULATION OF THIS COUNTRY.

4. THE PRESIDENT GAVE HIS SPEECH IN SPANISH, AND IT WAS
OBVIOUSLY WELL RECEIVED BY THE CROWD. THIS HUGE GATHERING
DIDN'T JUST HAPPEN, IT WAS PRETTY MUCH A COMMAND
PERFORMANCE FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, GRADE SCHOOL KIDS, ETC.
BUT MOST OF THE CROWD SEEMED TO BE THERE BECAUSE THEY
WANTED TO BE, AND THEY WERE ENTHUSIASTICALLY SUPPORTIVE OF
PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE TREATIES. IT HAS TO BE CONSIDERED
A TRIUMPH FOR OUR PRESIDENT AND FOR TORRIJOS.

5. ON FRIDAY EVENING AND SATURDAY MORNING, THERE WERE
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MULTILATERAL MEETINGS OF THE CHIEFS OF STATE/GOVERNMENT.
WE HAVE NO READ-OUT ON THEM YET. ALSO, PRESIDENT CARTER
HAD BREAKFAST SATURDAY WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS.

6. ROUGHLY THE LAST FOUR HOURSOF THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT
TO THE ISTHMUS WAS SPENT IN THE CANAL ZONE. SOME 45
MINUTES WERE SPENT OVERFLYING THE ZONE. THEN THE PRESIDENT
SPOKE TO A CROWD OF OVER 7,000 AMERICANS--MILITARY AND
CIVILIAN--AT FORT CLAYTON. THIS COULD HAVE BEEN TOUCHY IN
VIEW OF ANTI-TREATY SENTIMENT AMONG MOST ZONE RESIDENTS,
ESPECIALLY CIVILIANS. THERE WERE A FEW HECKLERS AND A
HOSTILE PLACARD-CARRIER OR TWO, BUT MOST OF THOSE ASSEMBLED
WERE RESPECTFUL AND APPEARED PLEASANTLY EXCITED TO HAVE
THIS CONTACT WITH THE PRESIDENT AND FIRST LADY. THE
SPEECH STRUCK US AS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE HEALING
PROCESS WHICH MUST TAKE PLACE HERE IF THE CANAL TREATY IS
TO WORK.

7. FOLLOWING A TOUR OF MIRAFLORES LOCKS, THE PRESIDENT
HAD LUNCH WITH A GROUP OF ZONE RESIDENTS AT A PICNIC AREA
OVERLOOKING THE CANAL. DR. RICHARD CHEVILLE, PRESIDENT OF
THE PACIFIC CIVIC COUNCILS, WHO ORGANIZED THE LUNCH, HAS

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INFORMED US THAT THE LUNCH WAS BOTH USEFUL AND PLEASANT. HE SAID THAT ALL THE PARTICIPANTS AGREED THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS IMPRESSIVE AND REASSURING. WE BELIEVE THIS REACTION WILL FILTER OUT TO THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE, THOUGH U.S. GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE ON THE MATTERS THAT CONCERN THEM WILL BE THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING. (CHEVILLE ALSO THOUGHT THE CLAYTON SPEECH WAS EXCELLENT, HITTING JUST THE RIGHT NOTE.)

8. THE TRIP WAS, OF COURSE, NOT A 100 PERCENT PLUS. THERE WERE SOME MINOR GLITCHES; E.G. THE PROGRAM FRIDAY RAN FAR BEHIND SCHEDULE. AND WE CAN EXPECT THAT SOME OF THE

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OPPOSITION (PARTICULARLY THE PARTIES) WILL COMPLAIN THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S EMBRACE OF TORRIJOS WAS UNNECESSARILY CLOSE. BUT WE BELIEVE THE RESULTS OF THE TRIP WERE HIGHLY BENEFICIAL IN LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR A NEW AND BETTER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PANAMA AND THE U.S. MOORE

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